



REQUIREMENTS FOR TRESTLE LADDERS IN NSW

SAFETY ALERT

This alert is intended to assist designers, manufacturers and suppliers (including hirers and lessors) of trestle ladders, and those responsible for their use (e.g. employers), in meeting their obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001* (the Regulation) in NSW to safeguard persons working at heights.

The consequences of falling from a height can be so great that the Regulation specifies requirements that must be observed to protect persons working at height from this risk. In particular, Clause 56(1)(a) sets out a hierarchy of controls that must be observed.

The first control, and therefore the preferred one, is “a stable and securely fenced work platform (such as a scaffolding or other form of portable work platform)”; refer to Clause 56(1)(a)(i).

Where scaffolding is used, the Regulation requires that its design complies with the relevant parts of the Australian Standard AS/(NZS) 1576 *Scaffolding*, and an employer must ensure that it is erected in accordance with Part 1 of that Standard, AS/NZS 1576.1 *General Requirements*.

Where another form of portable work platform is used instead of scaffolding, it must be stable and securely fenced, and provide an equivalent level of safety as scaffolding that complies with AS/(NZS) 1576.

Trestle ladders are subject to the Australian Standard AS 1892 *Portable ladders*. Trestle ladders also fit into the definition of a scaffold under the OHS Regulation and, for a system comprising a work platform supported from trestle ladders to achieve an equivalent level of safety as a scaffold, the following applies:

- The components must be designed to support a specified load – or ‘duty rating’ – and this must be clearly stated on the trestle ladders. The minimum duty ratings is ‘light duty’, which equates to 2.2kN (224kg), including a single point of 1kN (102kg).
- The platform must be at least 450mm wide, and be supported by the trestle ladder across its entire width.
- The platform and trestle ladders must remain stable at all time during operations and while people access the platform.

Note: Stability can be increased by adding outriggers to the system.

- The system must be capable of accommodating edge protection that comprises a guardrail, midrail and toeboard, or a guardrail and an infill panel that serves the same function as a midrail and toeboard. Such edge protection must be provided when a person or object can fall two meters or more from the platform – for example, if the platform is two meters above the supporting ground or if the platform is erected adjacent to the edge of a floor slab, balcony or stairwell – and may be required when the potential fall-height is less – for example, if working adjacent to exposed vertical steel reinforcement bars.
- There must be a clear, dedicated safe means of access to and from the platform. Where it is intended that access is gained via the trestle ladders, the runs – or ‘crossbearers’ – along the access face should be spaced between 248mm and 306mm apart, and the spacings must be regular. In addition, to accommodate easy transfer from ladders to the platform, either the stiles must over-run the platform level by 900mm or an additional

vertical member must be provided that extends this distance above the level of the platform at the point of access; this may be part of the edge protection.

- Where the trestle ladders are not used for access, or where the ends of the platform extends beyond the top of the trestle ladders or the platform is erected on crossbearers lower than the topmost, an external means of access should be provided.
- The platform itself must be level and stable. Scaffold planks should comply with the Australian Standard AS 1577 Scaffold planks, which has the legislative status of a deemed-to-comply Industry Code of Practice other material, such as timber decking, must provided a equivalent level of safety as scaffold planks that comply with the Australian Standard. This requirement extends to the deflection of the platform under load, which should not be greater than 25mm.

Designers, manufacturers and suppliers of trestle ladders (and trestle ladder platform systems) and those responsible for their use must ensure that the system incorporates these features, and appropriate information is developed and provided to enable them to be used properly.

A WorkCover Officer visiting a workplace where trestle ladders are being used to support a temporary work platform may seek confirmation that the system complied with the requirements specified in this alert. If the WorkCover officer forms an opinion that persons are exposed to risk of falling, the officer may take appropriate action.

For further information about this matter please contact WorkCover's Information Centre on **13 10 50**.